

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF TEACHING ENGLISH FOR STUDENTS WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENT

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Abstract: This article is aimed at (1) describing the process of teaching and learning English for students with hearing impairment in the second grade of SMALB-B YRTRW Surakarta, (2) identifying the problems faced in the teaching and learning process and (3) the teacher's solutions for those problems. The method used in the research was descriptive qualitative. The data were collected through the use of interview, questionnaire, observation, and document analysis. Based on the result of the research, it can be concluded that: (1) there was a good interaction between the English teacher and the students although there were some problems in the teaching learning process; (2) there were 9 problems that can be identified from the teaching learning process and the students' hearing impairment problem was one among them, (3) the English teacher has found and stated the solutions or strategies to solve those problems.

Key words: teaching English, descriptive qualitative, hearing impairment

English is the most promoted and universal language in the world. Brown (2000: 118) states that English has become a tool for international communication in transportation, commerce, banking, tourism, technology, diplomacy, and scientific research. In Indonesia, English as a foreign language has a very important role in international communication. Primarily, it is for increasing the competitiveness of the nation toward the world.

The importance of learning and mastering English language is intended for every student without exception. As we know, not all of the students are similar. There are some students who have special needs. It can be mentioned that there are normal and exceptional students. Blackhurst and Berdine (1981: 9) define exceptional children as children who have physical, mental, behavioral, or sensory characteristics that are different from the regular or majority

of children who require special education and related services to develop their maximum capacity.

English is a means for communicating by spoken or sign and written language. The ability to communicate in a full understanding is the ability to comprehend and produce spoken or written text which is attained in four language skills. According to Widdowson (1978: 57), those four skills in English are: understanding speech (listening), speaking, reading, and writing. They are the skills which are used to respond or create a conversation in social life.

For students with hearing impairment, logically, they will get difficulties in listening skill and it can also bring the problem in speaking skill. Without neglecting the disability, listening and speaking are still the parts and very important skills in English language. Moreover, English is also tested in

the national examination for exceptional schools that obviously includes SLBB.

Blackhurst and Berdine (1981: 164) and Gargiulo (2012: 397) agree about the definition to reflect the importance of hearing in language acquisition and their definitions are almost similar that “hearing impairment” is a generic term indicating a hearing disability that may range in severity from mild to profound. According to Geers (2006) in Gargiulo (2012: 412), the educational achievement of students with hearing impairments may be significantly delayed if it is compared with the hearing students.

There are two kinds of education placement for children with hearing impairment. They are normal or public school and exceptional or special school. Gargiulo (2012: 421) states that public school programs include inclusive classroom settings, resource rooms, self-contained classrooms, and itinerant services. On the other hand, special school programs include public and private residential and day schools with specifically prepared teachers and dormitory facilities for students when appropriate.

One of the exceptional schools in Surakarta is SLB-B YRTRW (*Yayasan Rehabilitasi Tuna Rungu Wicara*). This school has been focusing on the rehabilitation for students with hearing and speech impairment. It has been standardized by BSNP (*Badan Standar Nasional Pendidikan*) of Indonesia that English is included as subjects that are taught in SLB-B. Same with the other schools, SLB-B YRTRW Surakarta has included English language as its subject.

Considering the importance of mastering English language and its skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing, it is interesting to study more in the case of teaching and learning English language process for hearing impaired students with their inadequacy and problems of it. Curiosity

and excitement brought the researcher to conduct a descriptive qualitative research for that matter. The objectives of the research are to describe the process of teaching and learning English for students with hearing impairment, identify the problems faced in the teaching and learning process and identify the teacher’s solutions for those problems.

RESEARCH METHOD

The researcher used the descriptive qualitative method in this research. Descriptive research describes and interprets events, condition, or situation, of the present. On the other hand, qualitative research is a research method based on post-positivism and naturalist paradigm (Joko Nurkamto, 2004: 3).

According to Lofland and Lofland (1984) in Moleong (2006: 157), sources of data in qualitative research are words and actions, the additional data can be documents or other sources. The event in this research was in the form of teaching and learning activities of English in the classroom. The informants were the English teacher and the second grade of the senior high school students of SLBB YRTRW Surakarta that consisted of 4 students. The documents were the only one English textbook material entitled as “English for Students with Special Need“, syllabus, lesson plans, and students’ questionnaire result.

Triangulation has been applied as the trustworthiness to check the validity of the data. According to Moleong (2006: 330), triangulation technique is the technique to check the data by using something beyond the data. In this research, the researcher chose and took the data sources of triangulation from the teacher, students of the second grade of the senior high school class of SLBB YRTRW Surakarta, and the researcher himself as an independent observer. Triangulation of the method was also

performed by crosschecking the data collected through interview with those obtained through observation and document analyses.

The data in this research were analyzed by using interactive model of data analysis that includes collecting the data, reducing the data, presenting the data and drawing conclusion (Sutopo, 2002: 95). The first step was collecting the data from interviews, questionnaire, observations, and document analyses. The second step was reducing the data in which by selecting, focusing, and simplifying the data. The third step was presenting the data by arranging those data in the form of description in order to come to the final step which was drawing conclusion.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

In the planning stage, it was found that the English teacher had already been aware about the regulation in the planning stage such as making the syllabus and lesson plan. The curriculum used in the school is different with the curriculum used in regular schools. It is in line with *Standar Isi SMALB* from *BSNP*. They have different standard of content but they share a same regulation for the standard of process including the regulation in making the syllabus and lesson plan which is based on *Permendiknas* number 41 in the year of 2007.

The teacher also considered the principals and components of the lesson plan, but she did not make the valid written syllabus and lesson plan before teaching senior high school classes in the first semester in the academic year of 2012/2013. The problem was the insufficiency or limited quantity of the teacher in the school. The English teacher taught English for the whole classes in the school since she was the only one English teacher. She also had to teach *Bahasa Indonesia* and *Agama Islam*.

The absence of syllabus and lesson plan before the implementation of teaching learning process indicates the mistake or insufficiency in fulfilling the regulation of Process Standard from *Permendiknas Nomor 41 Tahun 2007* that, “*Setiap guru pada satuan pendidikan berkewajiban menyusun RPP secara lengkap dan sistematis....*”

About the statement of the goal in the implementation stage, the English teacher delivered the learning goal generally in the beginning of the daily classroom lesson with simple and understandable way for the students. She also stated the purpose or benefit for learning the discussed material but she did not inform the syllabus or the goals in beginning of the semester to the students. The problems were the students’ language poverty, limited understanding, and the limited communication with the students because of their hearing impairment.

However, informing the syllabus to the students in the beginning of the semester has been regulated by the government. It was written in the *Permendiknas Nomor 41 Tahun 2007* that, “*pada tiap awal semester, guru menyampaikan silabus mata pelajaran yang diampunya.*”

About the used method in teaching hearing impaired students, the English teacher and the school applied the use of total communication method or *Komunikasi Total (Komtal)* which is the combination of lip reading or oral language and sign language. It implies that the school including the English teacher supports the view that lipreading alone is not a sufficient media for language mastery. According to Lenneberg in Priyono (2012), the contact of hearing impaired children would be very poor in comparison with the hearing children if they only depend on lipreading.

About the general teaching method, the teacher used lecturing method, translation method, task-based language teaching, and a

brief peer teaching if necessary such as when the teacher had problem in explaining the student because of the limited communication between the teacher and the student. It was not possible or difficult to implement some communicative language teaching such as jigsaw, discussion, debate, oral presentation, and communication games in English. It was also found that the teacher rarely implemented group works for the students. The problems were the students' language poverty, pronunciation, hearing impairment, and the very limited time allocation for English subject because of the ineffectiveness of teaching learning activities in the afternoon.

The materials used were in line with the Basic Competencies from *BSNP*. The source of the materials only came from a textbook which was made exclusively by exceptional school teachers for exceptional schools. The problems of this limited source of material was the English teacher's limited mastery in using ICT such as Internet.

The media used were conventional and limited such as the textbook, whiteboard, and picture. The English teacher did not use electronic audio devices and modern audiovisual media such as video, film, and power point by the use of LCD to teach English for the second grade of senior high exceptional school students. The problems were the English teacher's limited mastery of ICT and the limited facility of the school.

There was a good interaction and relationship between the teacher and the students. The teacher thought that the students are active, responsive, and cooperative. From the other side, the students liked the English teacher. Larsen-Freeman (2000: 94) states that building relationship with and among students is very important.

The English teacher played the roles as motivator, mediator, facilitator, counselor, and need analyst. It is in line with the

teacher's roles proposed by Richard and Rodgers (2001: 167). The students played their roles as the actor of problem searching and problem solving, information explorer, and active participant in the learning activities. It is in line with the student's roles proposed by Giono (1993). The problem was in the oral activities such as listening and speaking because of the students' hearing and speech impairment.

About the use of English language in the interaction between the teacher and the students, it was still very limited and difficult to be applied in the teaching learning process and daily activities. The problems were the students' hearing and speech impairment, students' language poverty, limited understanding and memory, and the very limited time allocation to learn and practice English because of the ineffectiveness of teaching learning activities in the afternoon.

In the evaluation stage, the English teacher conducted it by giving task or assignment and daily quiz. The evaluation consisted of formative and summative tests. In the matter of assessment for students with hearing impairment, the English teacher did the cognitive assessment, communication assessment, and personal/social/behavioral assessment. It is in line with the statement from Simeonsson & Rosenthal (2001) in Gargiulo (2012: 412) that the main objective of assessment for students with a hearing impairment is to put together an accurate picture of cognitive, communicative, and personal characteristics.

The teacher evaluated the four skills or aspects in English which are listening, speaking, reading, and writing by integrating some or all of them in the teaching learning process and she needed to adjust them to students' ability. It is good since it is in the same line with Richards (2001: 13) who suggests that a communicative class is trying

to link the different skills together because they usually occur together in the real world.

In teaching and evaluating listening skill, the English teacher did not use any recorded material such as video or audio. It only could be done in the classroom interaction with the students. It was because of the limited facility in the school. In teaching and evaluating speaking skill, the English teacher used sign language and writing at the whiteboard to support the speaking activity. However, listening and speaking skill were difficult to be optimized as well as for normal students because of hearing impairment problem. For teaching and evaluating reading skill, the English teacher used reading material or text but she needed to translate the question and instruction first before the students can answer the questions because of the students' language poverty and limited understanding. The possible evaluation for writing skill was only in a form of a short sentence at maximum. The problems were the students' limited memorizing ability and understanding.

From the description of the teaching learning process, there were 9 problems that can be identified. The problems were (1) students' hearing and speech impairment, (2) language poverty, (3) pronunciation, (4) limited understanding and memorizing ability, (5) limited quantity of English subject teacher, (6) the English teacher's limited ICT mastery, (7) facility insufficiency, (8) the ineffectiveness of the teaching learning activities after the second rest time, and (9) the very limited time allocation for English subject.

The teacher's solutions to solve the students' hearing impairment problem were by suggesting the students' parents to provide or facilitate hearing aid for their children that is in line with Kuder (2008) as cited in Gargiulo (2012: 397) that the use of a hearing

aid is frequently necessary or desirable to enhance residual hearing; managing students sitting position in the classroom based on the degree of hearing loss which meets the first point of classroom management regulation in Permendiknas Nomor 41 Tahun 2007; and by increasing voice and clarifying the articulation when teaching which meet the second point of the same regulation.

Students' language poverty problem is in line with the statement from Blackhurst and Berdine (1981: 194) that a hearing loss can also result in poor diction. The teacher's solution for students' language poverty problem was by asking them to find new words from any sources such as TV news, films, public signs, books, and students' T-shirt and then discussed it later in the classroom lesson.

The teacher's solution for the pronunciation problem was by correcting students' pronunciation loudly and writing the way to pronounce it at the whiteboard by Indonesian pronunciation system as the students' basic or first language. It was like teaching pronunciation by using phonetic symbols but the symbols used were in Indonesian system.

The teacher's solution to solve the students' limited understanding and memorizing ability problems was by teaching the students to translate the text and the instruction firstly before asking the possible simple question with short answer. It can be said that the English teacher has the same idea with Alan Duff (1989: 6) about the use of translation in the classroom teaching learning process.

The teacher's solutions to overcome the limited quantity of teacher were by expecting the school to add more teachers and taking advantage of her knowledge and years of experiences in teaching such as by viewing the Basic Competence, considering the principals in the lesson plan, deciding, and

imagining the indicators, material, source of material, and the method for the matter of planning before teaching.

The teacher's solution to solve her limited ICT mastery problem was by buying netbook and modem, and then learning to use them everyday to improve her ability. It is good since practice makes better. Learning to use Information and Communication Technology such as computer or netbook and internet is a practical matter. It needs to be practiced frequently and diligently.

The teacher's effort to overcome the facility insufficiency problem was by asking for *BOS (Bantuan Operasional Sekolah)* for the possible requests such as requesting a dictionary. About the language laboratory, it was difficult to be fulfilled because of the limited room and space in the school area. The teacher's solution was also by optimizing the available facility and using traditional way as a substitution for the use of language laboratory.

The English teacher used personal psychological approach to the students and made a relaxed and humorous classroom situation but preferred to be emphatic for the discipline in the matter of task or assignment to overcome the ineffectiveness of the teaching learning activities after the second rest time. It is supported by Richards and Rodgers (2001) that learning takes place when students psychologically feel comfortable and secured. It is also supported by Larsen-Freeman (2000: 95) that people learn non-defensively when they feel secure.

It was found that the time allocation for each session was only 30 minutes. Based on BSNP (*Badan Standar Nasional Pendidikan*), it should be 40 minutes for exceptional senior high school (SMALB). The minimal time allocation for English subject in a week based on BSNP is 2x40 minutes. It was found that the allocation for English in SLBB YRTRW Surakarta was

2x30 minutes. In fact, it was even lesser because the lesson was not started on time.

The teacher's solution for the limited time problem was by teaching the material concisely and efficiently without reducing the goal and also by optimizing task-based method especially in the form of homework. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001: 223), engaging learners in the task work provides a better context for the activation of learning processes than form-focused activities, and therefore ultimately provides better opportunities for language learning to take place.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

It can be concluded that teaching English for students with hearing impairment is complicated, challenging and demanding. There were many problems and difficulties in the process of teaching and learning English. The teacher who was the only one English teacher is expected to have extra diligence and creativity. Although there were still some insufficiencies, the English teacher could make a good interaction and relationship with the students. It is good to know that the school and the teacher consider the students' condition then they accommodate them to make the students feel secured and enjoy the teaching learning process. It is also gladdening to know that the English teacher is an experienced teacher, she knew the students' characteristics well, and she was capable to think and find the solution to solve the occurring problems.

Based on the findings and discussions, there are some suggestions for the school, teacher, and students. The school should concern more on English subject such as by adding the time allotment for English subject, recruit more teacher because the very limited quantity of the teachers, allocate the schedule for English in the morning or before the tiring practical subjects such as cooking, hairdressing, and tailoring, pay more attention

in the value of discipline for the teachers and students, and increase or add the facilities in the form of teaching media for English to support the teaching learning process.

The teacher should plan and prepare the teaching learning process well, improve group works, give more actual and interesting materials that can be taken from internet or newspaper in English, vary the teaching learning media, discipline the students. Positive and educating punishment can be given if necessary. The teacher can discipline the students by saying that if the students make the lesson is started lately or not on time, the time to end the lesson and go home will be later. The students should be more discipline, not be ashamed to wear hearing aid, practice their focus and lip reading more, and be more autonomous in developing their knowledge and skills of English language.

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